

Erie County Unveils K-9 Memorial at Black Rock Park

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Installation of Monument to Law Enforcement Dogs is Latest Addition to County's Newest Park

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Today, Commissioner of the Erie County Department of Environment & Planning Maria Whyte was joined by Commissioner of the Department of Parks, Recreation & Forestry Troy Schinzel, Erie County Sheriff Timothy Howard and members of the Sheriff's office K-9 unit, Erie County legislator Lynn Marinelli, elected officials, members of the law enforcement community, members of the Niagara River Greenway Commission, and members of the Black Rock Canal Park Steering Committee to officially unveil the Park's newest addition, a stone K-9 monument honoring past and current dogs that have served in the Sheriff's department and in general law enforcement. The monument is located inside the Dog Park area in Black Rock Canal Park, which is itself the first Dog Park in Erie County.

Commissioner Whyte said, "There continue to be improvements made to the county's Black Rock Canal Park and this dog memorial is an exciting new addition. Our law enforcement personnel and K-9 units deserve recognition and it is so great to see them get the recognition they deserve at this local, waterfront dog park."

The Dog Park at Black Rock Canal Park, approximately 2/3 of an acre in size, is located at the southern end of the park on the other side of Cornelius Creek, and offers exercise options for dog breeds of all sizes. Overlooking the Niagara River, the space is split into two fenced areas designated for larger and smaller breeds. Each side features shaded areas for cooling off, allowing dog owners and their canine friends to socialize with like-sized colleagues.

"The Erie County Parks Department is honored to have the installation and dedication of this K-9 memorial at Black Rock Canal Park," **said Commissioner Schinzel**. "Words simply cannot convey the dedication and deep relationship these canines and their handlers have with one another. This beautiful monument is just the latest in a number of vast improvements at Black Rock Canal Park, with more to follow."

The K-9 monument, which currently holds the engraved names of 14 law enforcement animals retired from the Sheriff's K-9 unit since 1983, features sides that can be added to in future years as more dogs are honored at the recommendation of law enforcement agencies. The monument is the first in Erie County to be devoted solely to law enforcement animals, recognizing the loyal and selfless contributions they make in protecting our communities.

“The permanent memorialization of the service and sacrifices that our K-partners and four-legged best friends have made for us, for our agencies, and ultimately for our communities is long overdue,” **said Erie County Sheriff Tim Howard.** “The training these dogs and their handlers undergo is intensive, extensive and extremely demanding, as are the jobs they perform and the dangers they routinely face. They deserve to be recognized.”

Margaret Szczepaniec, President of the Black Rock Canal Park Steering Committee, added, “We are honored to remember these K-9 officers who performed their duties with courage and distinction and celebrate the contributions they have made in serving the community. This is a small, sincere token of appreciation to the officers that have spent their lives in the pursuit of justice.”

The K-9 monument is made of Columbian Basin basalt, a volcanic rock, from the central Washington State area. The rock in the monument was formed over 17 million years ago and weighs approximately 200 lbs. per linear foot, giving the monument a total weight of over 1,000 lbs.

In addition to the Dog Park, the Black Rock Canal Park’s transformation included incorporating numerous “green” features such as increased green space and lawn areas, the use of porous pavement and pavers throughout the park, the use of decorative stone filter strips and bioswales to help control runoff, and the installation of LED light fixtures and solar compacting trash cans to make the park more environmentally friendly while enhancing its beauty and utility.

Formerly known as the Ontario Street Boat Launch and Cornelius Creek Park, the new Black Rock Canal Park had been noted by the Park Steering Committee as an area needing improvements due to vandalism and an unsafe atmosphere after dark. The committee, a community group composed of concerned residents, worked in conjunction with Erie County to raise the funds needed to complete a feasibility study and master plan for the improvements. The study and master plan were completed in 2010. Funding for the feasibility study, master plan, and Phase I of construction amounted to approximately \$1,000,000 and was provided by the NYS Department of State-Environmental Protection Fund, NYS Department of Transportation, NYS Canal Corporation, Niagara River Greenway Commission, Erie County, and the City of Buffalo.